

OUR SHORT STORY PAGE

The Woman in the Case...

By Lilian Bell



COPYRIGHT 1908 BY DENJ.B. HAMPTON.

TEN thousand dollars in debt again!"

Old man Gorham stared at the papers on his desk and rang for his confidential clerk. The others in the office shivered when they heard the summons and turned up their coat collars in silent sympathy as Jefferson Mills passed their desks. But Mills only grinned and went fearlessly by. He had been Horace's classmate at Princeton and was not one whit afraid of "Old Gore'em."

"Have you seen this report?" asked the old man, holding up some papers.

"Yes, sir; looks bad, doesn't it?"

"Bad!" roared the old man. "It's worse than that. It's ruin unless we can stop it. Our sales have fallen off one fifth since Oxenham and Steere got onto the instantaneous chocolate. They've got seven of our best customers in the last three months."

"And twelve during the year," added Mills quietly. Old Gorham looked at him.

"We must get something. You must," he said. Mills nodded.

"Did you know I ran those fellows out of Westbury in '87?" asked Gorham.

"Yes, sir. But it's a pity you ran them only as far as Eastport. It's perfectly easy for both to go for the same trade."

The old man said nothing. Mills watched him. He knew he had not been sent for to discuss the yearly report of Gorham & Bullock. Finally the old man took up another paper.

"This is from Horace," he said. "In debt again."

Mills raised his eyebrows as if something incredible had been announced, but inwardly he was grinning. He knew the old man secretly worshipped Horace.

"Ten thousand more," said the old man. "Did you know that his trip around the world cost me a quarter of a million? He must have left a streak of red paint a mile wide across Europe."

Suddenly the door opened, and a boy put his head in.

"Two men to see you, sir. And young Mr. Gorham."

"Let Mr. Gorham in and keep the others out. You may go, Mills."

The door closed, opened again, and closed.

"You sent for me, sir," said Horace.

"I did," said the elder man grimly. "Sit down. I want to talk to you."

Horace sat down, swinging his stick. He wore a frock coat, a high hat and a gardenia in his buttonhole. A monocle depended from a silk cord about his neck.

The old man paused for a moment, struck by the boy's resemblance to his mother, that delicate-minded, high-strung woman whose memory the old man worshipped. Although she had been dead twelve years, the wonder was still upon him that she had married him. Aye, and loved him, too, for he had not been rich when he won her. Yet with all her dainty ways, her delicate upbringing, and her refinement, against which his own uncouthness must at times have borne heavily, not once, in spite of his constant fear of it, had she spoken against any of "his ways." But to this day the thought still troubled him that his lack of breeding had revolted her. He strove to comfort himself with the thought that when prosperity came he had been lavish with his money, and as a crowning penance he had yielded, albeit sorely against his will, to her demand for a college education for her boy with a finishing tour of the world with plenty of money to spend.

As he sat facing the fashionably garbed youth, so painfully out of place in a business office, he felt a grim satisfaction in the fact that, if outward appearances were to be believed, he had been right and Cecily wrong, for here sat but the ruin of a real man.

The old man believed so little in the voices of the soul that he was accustomed to override any tendency he felt which threatened to warp his cool judgment, so, in this instance, the halt occasioned by his son's strong resemblance to his mother was of short duration, so short, indeed, that the boy did not notice it at all.

"I want to ask you," began the cold voice, "if you have no respect for me at all, that you come to a business office in business hours, dressed like a tailor's dummy? Gloves! And flowers! By the Lord Harry, how did you come to forget your earnings?"

He paused, and to his intense anger he saw his son repress a smile.

"I've made you what you are! It's all my fault. I sent you East to school when you should have been in a common public school here in Westbury with niggers and dagos to teach you that all men are born equal. I was the fool that let you go prancing all over Europe with more money than brains, aping the low-down whelps that all rich men's sons have come to be. It's my fault that you got to gambling and drinking and playing the fool generally. But I'll be cursed if I think it is my fault that you've learned to dress that way, or that there wasn't enough sense in your mother and me to make you know better than to shame me before my clerks and fellow business men. I've lied some and I've got ahead of the other fellow by fair means or foul when I found I had to get rid of him, but I never was so ashamed of anything before in the whole of my born days as I am to think I am the father of the thing you are. It makes me sick to my stomach to look at you!"

"I don't kick at your extravagances. I've paid often and I was going to talk to you and tell you to go a little easy. But that was all. I've stood your college clothes ever since you came home. I've borne your swallowtail at supper every evening. I've said nothing at your having your meals in courses. I've discharged the cook I've had ever since your

mother died because she wouldn't do to please you, and I got an impudent hussy that nearly runs me crazy, so's you could be suited. I reason to keep you under my roof, so's you wouldn't have the excuse Jake Oxenham's boys had for going to the devil. I've stood the way you've got your rooms fixed up, to look just like a girl's. I made up my mind that I'd got a daughter now instead of a son—lots of fathers have had to bear up under the same thing and as long as it was hid from the neighbors I didn't care so much. But I sto-4 it. I said to myself, this is part of the price. And I'll pay. I've watched you pour oil on greens and eat the nasty mess, thinking of the castor oil mother used to make me take. I've lived through four stinking up the house with that Japanese stuff you burn. I've nearly busted, but I've done it. But now, to-day, to see you insult me to my face by coming to my office in business hours—it ain't three o'clock yet—in gloves and a stove-pipe hat and a foolish English window glass for one eye—I tell you boy, you've made me by this one act the laughing stock of the whole of Westbury. And I'm sore!"

If youth could ever be tolerant, the boy would have seen that all through this bitter tirade there was an appeal for a better understanding—that the bitterness was forced from the old man to hide the anxiety of the appeal. But the surprise the attack first occasioned in Horace. Gorham's mind soon gave way to indignation, then to wounded pride, then to anger. He sat very still, but while around the nostrils as the old man remembered Cecily had looked the only time he ever made an attempt to whip the little lad.

"Have you done?" inquired the young man as his father paused.

"Yes, for the present!"

"Then let me say a few things to you. You don't deserve an explanation for my having disgraced you so utterly by dressing in this manner, but nevertheless, because you are my father, I will tell you that I am on my way to Miss Shepard's reception for Miss Anna Schofield, and as she asked me to come early, I would not have had time to go home and dress. Your note said half past two, and I know you like promptness. This monocle which has aroused your insulting fury is not the senseless imitation of a foreign fad which you seem to think, but a magnifying lens to correct defective eyesight when I wish to examine a thing closely. But this is not what I wish to say." He paused and looked his father full in the eye.

"Has it ever occurred to you that it is a mistake for a man deliberately to remain a product of pioneer days when everybody else advances? You pride yourself on being 'independent' because you pour your coffee into your saucer, cut your pie with a knife, and eat sugar on raw cabbage. I call it simply bad manners. I am, as you say, what you and my mother have made me, and whatever the taste I have acquired in the course of my education make life with you a daily torture. I would cheerfully allow you the eccentricities of old age or of prejudice, but I cannot admit that to sit in the parlor evenings in your stocking feet or to shovel food into your mouth with your knife and fork either to your comfort or to the elegance of a home."

"Go on," said his father. "Go on to your reception and with your engagement to Anna Schofield—another of your same sort—lank and flat as a side of bacon. I suppose she likes the sort of pill you are. If so, she's a fool."

"She's no fool, sir. She's the best and dearest girl I ever knew. Moreover she is my affianced wife."

"So you're engaged, are you?" snorted the old man. "And on what prospects? Well, go on! I don't care what you do. Marry her if you wish—but get out of my sight once and forever! I never want to see your face again! You'll have fifty dollars a month from me from now on. Not a penny more! You—impudent puppy! I—"

"Don't trouble to say more," said his son coolly. "And keep your fifty. You may need it. I shall not. I'll make my own money!"

"You make money?" sneered the old man. "You! You can't make enough to buy oil for your salad. You talk to me about eating cold slaw. At least I don't eat grass like a donkey or a jackass!"

"You brought my mother's name into this disgracefully frank conversation. Let me hazard just one remark. Have you ever thought how your hideous non-refinement must have made her suffer? I have only been at home a few months. She bore it for twelve years. Have you ever thought of that? Remember, she loved and was used to the ways you

condemn in me. My God! She bore seeing you eat cold cabbage with sugar and vinegar on it every day for twelve years."

The old man rose unsteadily. He was shaking from head to foot. Horace rose also, appalled by the result of his words. His father leaned forward heavily on his desk, then he raised one hand and pointed to the door. His son hesitated a moment, torn between pity and resentment. Then anger won the office.

With the slamming of the door, the old man tottered and sank back into his chair.

"I've done it," he whispered. "I've driven Cecily's son away from me forever."

He buried his face in his arms and remained motionless, while in swift review all the twelve years of his married life passed before him. He writhed as he remembered Horace's words about his mother. Suddenly he raised his head.

"I promised her," he muttered. "And I've lied! Lied to my Cecily! The boy will starve!"

He rang the bell and Jefferson Mills came in.

"Jeff," said the old man, "I've had words with Horace and cut him off without a cent—turned him adrift to earn his own living. He hasn't a dollar; he never has made one and never can. I've been

"We desired your presence—not your presents!"

Whereat old Gore'em chuckled silently.

But he was not happy. His daily life had lost its savor. He no longer enjoyed what formerly had been his pleasures. One by one he discarded every uncouth way Horace had mentioned, and he even went so far as to buy his clothes in Chicago. In his eating he endeavored to reform also, but old ways are hard to mend and his cold slaw with sugar and vinegar still tasted better to him than the lettuce Horace dressed and ate with such relish.

"If I could only get something to make the darned stuff tasty, I'd be fixed!" he often muttered over his futile efforts to eat a French dressing, but the taste of oil made him actively ill.

Finally, one day a small box arrived at his store addressed to him personally. It proved to be dainty little sample bottles of some golden mixture and it was labeled Nasturtium Salad Dressing. One line in the advertisement caught the old man's eye.

"Those persons who cannot bear the taste of oil will find in Nasturtium Salad Dressing a mixture so exquisitely blended that were it spread on grass itself—could the open prairies be covered with this delicious mixture, it would make of every pasture and prairie between Bangor and Tampa, between

Boston and the Golden Gate, a salad fit for the gods!"

Old Gorham looked at the little bottle over through his steel-rimmed spectacles.

"Some poor little firm trying to get a start, I suppose! Well, I'll try it myself, and if it does half what he says, I'll not only sell it by the carload, but I'll put up the money for him to enlarge his output."

He waited till he was alone that day, and then, drawing the bottle from his pocket, he very gingerly poured a little Nasturtium Salad Dressing over one leaf of lettuce; he wasn't going to risk spoiling a plateful. He tasted it carefully, then again. He looked around. No one was watching his fall from grace, so he boldly took heart and poured it over the plateful he had set aside in order not to waste it.

Ten minutes later he rang the bell, and when the maid appeared, he said:

"Is there any more lettuce in the house?"

"Yes, sir."

"Then bring me all there is."

He ate a whole head of lettuce and walked down to the store like a man who has suddenly found himself.

And Jefferson Mills, who tried to help the stenographer afterwards, grinned with glee as he looked over the letters and the order book.

In four months after Gorham & Bullock began to exploit Nasturtium Salad Dressing they had recovered all their old customers drawn away by Oxenham & Steere and were running up sales, not only in Nasturtium Salad but along other lines of goods, some of which had been maintained at a loss until a new era of prosperity seemed to have dawned.

Suddenly an unprecedented thing occurred. An order came from Oxenham & Steere for twenty cases of Nasturtium Salad Dressing at retail prices.

"We must carry the stuff; it is in such demand," they wrote, "but for some inexplicable reason, the makers refuse to sell to us."

As old Gore'em read this letter, he pondered several moments in silence; then a light broke over his face and he brought his fist down on his desk until the pens bounced. He rang for Jefferson Mills—now cashier at three thousand.

"Jeff, who makes Nasturtium Salad Dressing?"

"Whom should you say, sir?" grinned Jeff.

"Do they live in Detroit?"

"Yes, sir."

"Jefferson!"

"Yes, sir."

"You and I will take the next train for Detroit. Go out and get the tickets."

It was very pretty, the neat little vine-covered cottage of the Horace Gorhams, and the old man had to admit that the furnishings were beautiful. Horace and his wife, Anna, radiant with pride and happiness, Jeff, and the old man sat down to talk it over.

"It's all due to Anna, father," said Horace. "When I left you that day I went and told Anna all about it. She took your part at once. She said I had behaved disgracefully. She reminded me of all you had done for me—of all that you had spent on my education—of how you had deprived yourself of my companionship for ten years—and she wouldn't even laugh when I said you bore up under the separation rather well! She actually cried when I repeated all I had said to you."

"Horace," she said, "you have wounded him—you have cut him to the heart, and it's up to you now to make good before you even apologize."

"And how shall I make good," said I, "without a cent?"

"She thought a moment. Then she said: 'You seem to have hurt him most by criticising his taste for food. Now, I know how to make a lovely salad

dressing that doesn't taste of oil. Let's make a few bottles and try them on him. If he likes it enough to order even one case, we'll begin to manufacture it.'

"You don't mean to say," interrupted the old man, "that those sample bottles you sent me were all you had?"

"You got our whole output," laughed Anna, interrupting. "Horace wrote the advertisement, and when your order came we borrowed money on your letter and began to ship to you only."

"Now, I'll be danged! If the story of Nasturtium Salad Dressing wouldn't be enough of itself to sell a carload of it."

"We're running day and night now," said Anna demurely.

"Well, write out this story, daughter, and to-morrow I'll put up the money to treble the works. We can't fill our advance orders on Nasturtium Salad Dressing in a year at this rate! And, little girl, I want you both to come home to live. You can do as you please, eat as you please, and live as you please. The old man will limp along at the pace you set as long as he has a leg. You and your Nasturtium Salad Dressing have done the trick."

BRIGHTEST BOY IN THE WORLD.

Most of us nowadays stumble through life with just enough mental arithmetic to figure out how much change the landlord will give us back out of our salary check. When we want to figure interest we do it Chinese fashion, on the ten fingers of our two lily-white hands. About all the Latin we know is "spiritus frumenti" and "habeas corpus." The only Greek we recognize is the word "Marathon," and we wouldn't know that if we saw it with its Athenian make-up on. On other things we're just as shaky. We aren't sure that calculus isn't a chemical, and that metaphysics hasn't got something to do with the pill business.

But at Tufts College, in Massachusetts, a boy will graduate next June at the age of fourteen, and we will all have to take off our mortar-board caps to him. He is Norbert Wiener, the son of a Harvard professor. This remarkable boy was born in Columbia, Missouri, November 26, 1894. He could repeat the alphabet at the age of eleven months, could read and write at three years, and at the age of eight he was fitted for college in mathematics, philosophy, modern languages, and the sciences. It required less than three years of schooling, after donning short trousers, for him to prepare for college. Boys seldom do this in less than ten or eleven years; usually it requires an even dozen, and often longer.

When Norbert Wiener entered Tufts in the autumn of 1906, he had gone further in chemistry and philosophy than the average senior. He was required to take several entrance examinations, mathematics among them, in which he was found to be far in advance of the freshman class. So, as a freshman, he did upper-class work in the theory of equations and in determinants, while in philosophy it was found necessary to place him in a class by himself. He had read Spencer, Haeckel, Darwin, Huxley, and many others. Now he has read Locke, Hobbes, and other English philosophers; he has translated Homer and several plays of Aeschylus, as well as a similar amount of Latin. In mathematics, he has delved into the Galois Theory of equations, and has completed differential and integral calculus. He will continue this branch this year, and will study the philosophies of Leibnitz, Spinoza, and Kant. In Greek, he will read Herodotus and Sophocles; the rest of his time will be taken up by biology and organic chemistry. In June, 1909, he will have completed the regular four-year course in three years, receiving the degree of Bachelor of Arts before he has reached the age of fifteen. But the work he has covered will equal the amount usually completed by a candidate for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

In the autumn following his graduation at Tufts College, he will enter the Harvard Graduate School, where he will elect work in higher mathematics, with a supplementary course in biology or chemistry. After receiving the doctor's degree at seventeen—an age when many students are not yet contemplating the entrance examinations—he will spend two or three years in Germany and France, devoting himself to philosophy and science. That is, at an age when the average boy has still two years of work ahead of him for his bachelor's degree, young Wiener will be doing advanced scientific work among the gray-bearded savants of a German university.

Prof. Leo Wiener, of the department of Slavic languages at Harvard, is of Russian parentage; the boy's mother is a native of Missouri. The other children of the family do not differ from other boys and girls of their ages. Apart from the fact that his capacity for learning is phenomenal, Norbert Wiener is like other boys. His physical development is excellent; he is a good tennis player and an expert swimmer. He is a tall boy, and a strict vegetarian. His head is normal in size, but his blazing, black eyes are almost vacuancy in their power. Personally, he chooses mathematics as his favorite study. Philosophy he calls "his fairyland."

WOMEN SOLDIERS NEXT.

Mme. Madeleine Pelletier, a physician and French version of the Suffragette, demands of the French Government that women be compelled to do military service just the same as men.

"In public meetings," says Mme. Pelletier, "when the claim is made for women to have the right to vote, very often some one will rise and shout: 'You wish to vote; then do your military service!'"

"I wish to furnish a response to this sort of person. It is objected that the guns are too heavy, the marches too long for women. Well, lighter guns can be made, and she doesn't need to march as much as men. Besides, women don't need to be soldiers; they can be nurses in the hospital and assist in secretarial work. But they must have uniforms. The uniform gives one prestige."

"In military education women will learn the necessity of violence. Women fear to inflict pain. They are wrong. Let them use violence. It alone will not make our cause triumph. I am an anti-militarist and think France wrong in making so much of the army; but I am also a Feminist, and I think that service in the army would improve women."



HIS FATHER RAISED ONE HAND AND POINTED TO THE DOOR.